

## **High Quality Options for Families: Offer Equal Educational Opportunities to All Children. Give Parents a Voice.**

### **Questions and Answers**

#### **Early Graduation Option**

What is the early high school graduation initiative?

- This proposal provides students an accelerated graduation option to offer additional flexibility along their educational pathways. Open to all high school students, accelerated graduation will allow students to continue their education via a state-supported scholarship while expanding their college and career options.

Why would a student choose to graduate early?

- This is a good option for students who are ready academically and developmentally to move to post-secondary work.

Is there any demand for early graduation?

- A 2010 survey conducted by Learn More Indiana showed that nearly three-fourths of high school students would consider taking advantage of an accelerated graduation option if it were provided to them.
- While very few students may take advantage of this option, the students who are ready to move on to college or career programs will benefit from this opportunity to do more with their last year of high school.

#### **Charter Schools**

What are charter schools?

- Charter schools are public schools that offer additional options for families who are not completely satisfied by the traditional public schools in their community.

Why do we need more charter schools?

- More charter schools mean more high-quality options for parents, which is particularly helpful to our poorest, at-risk students and communities. Currently, only around 2 percent of students are enrolled in charter schools, and it is extremely difficult for many students to gain admittance due to long waiting lists and a crowded lottery process.
- We don't just need more charter schools; we need more high-quality charter schools, which is why enforcing rigorous accountability on charter authorizers is so important.

How are charter schools funded?

- Charter schools are funded with state monies, as are traditional public schools.

- Under the proposal, a charter school would be provided favorable lease or purchase options for unused or underutilized public school buildings in a corporation.
  - Currently, charters often are forced to scrape for appropriate facilities for students.

How are students selected to attend charter schools?

- Charter schools must let in as many students as they can teach—without selectively choosing which students they will enroll based on student performance or any other factor.
- When charter schools lack the capacity to serve the amount of students who apply, which is often the case, the schools hold lotteries to randomly select students for enrollment.

Will poor-performing charter schools be closed?

- The State Board of Education (SBE) will establish a timeline and consequences for charter authorizers that fail to meet the SBE's standards. Consequences could include a moratorium on a particular authorizer starting new charters or the revocation of an authorizer's power to continue overseeing charters. In that case, the SBE would make sure all existing high-quality charters are transferred to other authorizers.

Who will be able to authorize charter schools?

- Currently, several bodies may authorize (or sponsor) charter schools:
  - The Mayor of Indianapolis
  - Public universities offering four-year degrees (only Ball State University has chosen to become an authorizer)
  - Public school corporations (only two have ever authorized any schools)
- Under this proposal, the following bodies would also be able to authorize charter schools:
  - A newly-created statewide chartering board called the Indiana Public Charter School Board
  - Private, four-year universities and colleges that are approved to authorize by the SBE
  - Mayors of Indiana's second class cities

## Virtual Charters

What is a virtual charter school?

- Virtual charters highlight the innovation that is possible in charter schools. Virtual schools use computers and technology to provide a high-quality education to students who cannot be served or are not well served in the traditional school setting.
- Indiana began piloting these virtual charters in the 2009-2010 school year.

What will happen to the virtual pilot schools?

- This proposal wraps up the pilot phase and keeps the two current virtual pilot schools as virtual charter schools. The proposal also allows new virtual schools to become authorized the same way any charter would.